Time to Learn Strategy

Instructional Time and Semestering

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

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Time to Learn Strategy: Instructional Time and Semestering

Background

Time and the way it is used are at the centre of the challenge to improve student learning and achievement. Research clearly states that time-on-learning is an important determiner of student success in school. The *Time to Learn* strategy centres on the importance of ensuring that, at every grade level, students and teachers use available instructional time effectively and productively. Increasing the *quality* of instructional time is key to improving student learning and achievement in all program areas and at all grade levels. In program areas targeted for significant improvement in student achievement, such as mathematics and literacy, increasing the *quantity* of instructional time, as well as the quality, is an important factor in improving opportunities for learning.

To date, *Time to Learn* initiatives have centred on maximizing and optimizing the amount of time that teachers spend on delivering the prescribed curriculum. The introduction of learning outcomes frameworks in most subject areas has focussed more attention on the importance of effective program planning and delivery to ensure that the all dimensions of the program and the full range of prescribed outcomes are addressed in the time allocated. There remains much work to be done in this area.

The introduction of a common school calendar (September 2000), in addition to standardizing dates for schools to open, close, and take holiday breaks, has addressed concerns at the high school level regarding the loss of instructional time because of extended examination breaks and early graduation. In addition, boards have taken steps to address the issue of instructional time lost because of non-curricular activities and are continuing to monitor schools in this regard.

The Department and school boards continue to investigate and discuss alternative ways of organizing the school year for students and teachers, and to review the research on the advantages and disadvantages of models used in other jurisdictions (year-round schooling, for example).The Department and school boards continue also to address the ongoing challenge of finding adequate and appropriate time (and funding) for scheduling in-service education and other professional development programs to meet the needs of the system, school staffs, and individual teachers while minimizing the loss of time in the classroom.

The recommendations presented in this paper relate to allotment of available instructional time to priority program areas and to effective semestering and scheduling practices. They reflect the commitment of the Department to

- improve the quality of learning and student achievement
- ensure that students have increased opportunities for learning in priority areas, notably literacy and mathematics
- provide teachers and students with blocks of uninterrupted instructional time long enough (but not too long) to engage students in active and interactive learning

- provide opportunities for all senior high students to earn credits toward graduation each semester, thus increasing motivation of potential "early leavers" to stay in school and facilitating re-entry of "early leavers" to resume their formal education

- provide design options that allow some courses to be offered year long to meet students' learning needs

Guiding Principles

- Students need "time to learn." Teachers need "time to teach." Time is a resource that can be used to create additional learning opportunities for students and additional teaching opportunities for teachers.

- It is critical to use time in the most efficient way to provide students every possible opportunity to be successful—dissecting the instructional day into small chunks of time is not in students' best interests.

- The Department and school boards will continue initiatives to help teachers and students use time in new, different, and better ways.

- Greater uniformity in the structure of the school year and consistency in organizational structures will respond to the needs of transfer students and the concerns of their parents.

Issues

- Schools, administrators, teachers, parents, and students have varying belief systems about the relative merits and benefits of non-semestered, partially semestered, and fully semestered structures.

- Variation in school circumstances such as staffing availability and subject area expertise have an impact on the school's ability to deliver the public school program effectively and to meet student and administration needs.

Recommendations: Instructional Time Grades Primary–6

- That allotment of instructional time for grades primary–6 reflect the identification of mathematics and literacy as program priorities.

- That 45 minutes *Math Time* every day be a guideline for program planning in grades primary–2, beginning September 2002 (represents 20% of instructional time).

- That 60 minutes *Math Time* every day be a guideline for program planning in grades 3–6, beginning September 2002 (represents 21% of instructional time).

- That *Math Time* for grades 1–6 include 5 minutes per day of "Mental Math."

- That 90–100 minutes every day be a guideline for planning the language arts program in grades primary–2, beginning September 2002 (represents 40–44% of instructional time).
- That 90–120 minutes every day be a guideline for planning the language arts program in grades 3–6, beginning September 2002 (represents 32–42% of instructional time).
- That within time designated for language arts in grades primary–3, a minimum of 60 minutes be designated as *Active Reading Hour* (implemented in September 2000).
- That every class, grades 4–6, include in its daily schedule one or more blocks of *Learn to Read/Read to Learn Time* totalling a minimum of 60 minutes, beginning in September 2002.
- That the Department and boards work together (through the Education Program Committee) to provide guidelines for time allotment to other subject areas to ensure a reasonable and productive balance of available time (guidelines to be available by September 2002).
- That boards and their schools develop a strategy to provide 30 minutes per day for physical education/physical activity programs for grades primary–6.

Recommendations: Instructional Time Grades 7–12

- That boards and their schools review time for learning in grades 7–9 in priority areas:
  - mathematics (Goal: 60 minutes per day, represents 20% of instructional time)
  - language arts and opportunities for literacy learning in other subject areas (part of *Active Readers* initiative to be introduced in grade 7 in 2002–03)
  - physical education and physical activity programs
- That boards continue to address the issue of instructional time lost because of non-curricular activities and to monitor schools in this regard.
- That boards hold high schools accountable for scheduling for grades 10–12 that provides opportunity for a minimum of 110 hours instructional time per credit.
- That schools consider the following model for organizing instructional time for grades 10–12:
  - 5 periods per day
  - 60-minute periods
  - 110 periods provide opportunity for the minimum instructional time required per credit.
  - 55 periods provide opportunity for the minimum instructional time required per half-credit

- 187 days – 9 days for examinations = 178 days per year, 89 days per semester
- 178 days x 5 periods = 890 hours instructional time per year ÷ 8 credits = 111 hours per credit

- That the instructional program for grades 10–12 include for each course direction and support for home study to make provision for school days lost because of storms, etc.

Recommendations: Semestering Grades 10–12

- That boards and their schools work toward consistency in semestering practices with a two-year phase in beginning 2002–03 (Goal is consistency by 2004–05).

- That year-long options be explored/provided for some compulsory credits (notably English/French language arts, mathematics).
  - That the Department and Boards continue to monitor the effectiveness of Mathematics 10 Plus and Mathematics Foundations 10 Plus as 220-hour, two-credit, year-long options.
  - That a similar model be explored for English/French language arts at the grade 10 level for students who require additional support in literacy.
  - That options be explored to provide additional time for grade 12 courses for which there is a Nova Scotia examination.

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

TIME TO LEARN STRATEGY

Guidelines for Instructional Time: Grades Primary–3

The *Time to Learn Strategy* (February 2002) includes the following recommendations relating to instructional time for grades primary–3:

- that allotment of instructional time for mathematics and literacy reflect their identification as priorities
- that 45 minutes *Math Time/Temps pour les maths* every day be a guideline for program planning in grades primary–2, beginning September 2002
- that 60 minutes *Math Time/Temps pour les maths* every day be a guideline for program planning in grade 3, beginning September 2002
- that *Math Time* for grades 1–3 include 5 minutes every day of mental math
- that 90–100 minutes every day be a guideline for planning the language arts program in grades primary–2, beginning September 2002
- that 90–120 minutes every day be a guideline for planning the language arts program in grade 3, beginning September 2002
- that within time designated for language arts in grades primary–3, a minimum of 60 minutes be designated as *Active Reading Hour/L'heure de lecture active* (implemented in September 2000)
- that boards and their schools develop a strategy to provide 30 minutes every day for physical education/physical activity programs

GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TIME: ENGLISH PROGRAM		
Subject Area	**Grades Primary–2**	**Grade 3**
English Language Arts Goal: 100–120 mins./day	40% **Minimum**: 90 mins./day (includes *Active Reading Hour*: 60 mins./day) 450 mins./week	40.4% **Minimum**: 115 mins./day (includes *Active Reading Hour*: 60 mins./day) 575 mins./week
Health Education	4.4% 50 mins./week	4.2% 60 mins./week
Mathematics	20% **Minimum**: 45 mins./day (includes *Mental Math:* 5 mins./ day grades 1 –2) 225 mins./week	21.1% **Minimum**: 60 mins./day (includes *Mental Math:* 5 mins./ day) 300 mins./week
Music	5.3% 60 mins./week	4.2% 60 mins./week
Physical Education Goal: 30 mins./day	9% 20 mins./day 100 mins./week	10.5% 30 mins./day 150 mins./week
Science	8% 90 mins./week	7.7% 110 mins./week
Social Studies	8% 90 mins./week	7.7% 110 mins./week
Visual Arts	5.3% 60 mins./week	4.2% 60 mins./week
Total	100% 225 mins. instruction/day **Minimum** 1125 mins. instruction/week **Minimum**	100% 285 mins. instruction/day **Minimum** 1475 mins. instruction/week **Minimum**
Minimum Requirements Each Day	▸ **4 hours of teaching** (may include 15-minute recess) ▸ 90 minutes English language arts including 60 mins.*Active Reading Hour* ▸ 45 minutes *Math Time* including 5 minutes Mental Math grades 1–2	▸ **5 hours of teaching** (may include 15-minute recess) ▸ 115 minutes English language arts including 60 mins. *Active Reading Hour* ▸ 60 minutes *Math Time* including 5 minutes Mental Math

GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TIME: IMMERSION PROGRAM		
Subject Area	**Grades Primary–2**	**Grade 3**
English Language Arts	—	16–18% **Minimum**: 45–50 mins./day 225–250 mins./week
French Language Arts	40% **Minimum**: 90 mins./day (includes *L'heure de lecture active*: 60 mins./day) 450 mins./week	26–28% **Minimum**: 75–80 mins./day (includes *L'heure de lecture active*: 60 mins./day) 375–400 mins./week
Health Education	4.4% 50 mins./week	3.9–4.2% 55–60 mins./week
Mathematics	20% **Minimum**: 45 mins./day (includes *Mental Math:* 5 mins./ day grades 1 –2) 225 mins./week	21% **Minimum**: 60 mins./day (includes *Mental Math:* 5 mins./ day grades 1 –2) 300 mins./week
Music	5.3% 60 mins./week	4.2% 60 mins./week
Physical Education Goal: 30 mins./day	9% 20 mins./day 100 mins./week	8.8% 25 mins./day 125 mins./week
Science	8% 90 mins./week	7–7.7% 100–110 mins./week
Social Studies	8% 90 mins./week	7–7.7% 100–110 mins./week
Visual Arts	5.3% 60 mins./week	4.2% 60 mins./week
Total	100% 225 mins. instruction/day **Minimum** 1125 mins. instruction/week **Minimum**	98.1%–103.8% 285 mins. instruction/day **Minimum** 1425 mins. instruction/week **Minimum**
Minimum Requirements Each Day	▸ **4 hours of teaching** (may include 15-minute recess) ▸ 90 minutes language arts including 60 minutes *L'heure de lecture active* ▸ 45 minutes *Math Time* including 5 minutes Mental Math grades 1–2	▸ **5 hours of teaching** (may include 15-minute recess) ▸ 120 minutes language arts including 60 minutes *L'heure de lecture active* ▸ 60 minutes *Math Time* including 5 minutes Mental Math

Note: Many elementary schools are able to offer more than the minimum 4 hours of teaching for grades primary–2 and the minimum 5 hours for grades 3–6. Allotment of available additional time should reflect the identification of mathematics and literacy as program priorities and the importance of daily opportunities for physical education and physical activity.

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

TIME TO LEARN STRATEGY

Guidelines for Instructional Time: Grades 4–6

The *Time to Learn Strategy* (February 2002) includes the following recommendations relating to instructional time for grades 4–6:

- that allotment of instructional time for mathematics and literacy reflect their identification as priorities
- that 60 minutes *Math Time/Temps pour les maths* every day be a guideline for program planning, beginning September 2002
- that *Math Time/Temps pour les maths* include 5 minutes per day of mental math
- that every class, grades 4–6, include in its daily schedule one or more blocks of *Learn to Read/Read to Learn Time / Apprendre à lire/Lire pour apprendre* totalling a minimum of 60 minutes, beginning in September 2002
- that boards and their schools develop a strategy to provide 30 minutes per day for physical education/physical activity programs

GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TIME: GRADES 4–6				
English Program			**Immersion Program**	
Core French	10.5%	30 mins./day 150 mins./week	**French Language Arts**	26–28% **Min.**: 75–80 mins./day 375–400 mins./week
English Language Arts Goal: 90–120 mins./day	31.6%	**Minimum**: 90 mins./day 450 mins./week	**English Language Arts**	16–18% **Min.**: 45–50 mins./day 225–250 mins./week
Health Education	4.2%	60 mins./week	**Health Education**	3.9–4.2% 55–60 mins./week
Mathematics	21.1%	**Minimum**: 60 mins./day (includes *Mental Math:* 5 mins./day) 300 mins./week	**Mathematics**	21.1% **Minimum**: 60 mins./day (includes *Mental Math:* 5 mins./day) 300 mins./week
Music	4.2%	60 mins./week	**Music**	4.2% 60 mins./week
Physical Education Goal: 30 mins./day	8.8%	25 mins./day 125 mins./week	**Physical Education**	8.8% 25 mins./day 125 mins./week
Science	7.7%	110 mins./week	**Science**	7.7% 110 mins./week
Social Studies	7.7%	110 mins./week	**Social Studies**	7–7.7% 100–110 mins./week
Visual Arts	4.2%	60 mins./week	**Visual Arts**	4.2% 60 mins./week
Minimum Requirements Each Day ▸ **5 hours of teaching** (may include 15-minute recess) ▸ 60 minutes *Math Time* including 5 minutes Mental Math ▸ 90 minutes language arts ▸ one or more blocks of *Learn to Read/Read to Learn Time* in English language arts and other subject areas totalling 60 minutes			**Minimum Requirements Each Day** ▸ **5 hours of teaching** (may include 15-minute recess) ▸ 60 minutes *Temps pour les maths* including 5 minutes Mental Math ▸ 75 minutes French language arts ▸ 45 minutes English language arts ▸ one or more blocks of time in language arts and other subject areas for *Apprendre à lire/Lire pour apprendre* totalling 60 minutes	

Note: Many elementary schools are able to offer more than the minimum 5 hours of teaching for grades 4–6. Allotment of available additional time should reflect the identification of mathematics and literacy as program priorities and the importance of daily opportunities for physical education and physical activity.

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

TIME TO LEARN STRATEGY

Guidelines for Instructional Time: Grades Primary–6

English Program: Grades Primary–6

ENGLISH PROGRAM							
	Primary	**Grade 1**	**Grade 2**	**Grade 3**	**Grade 4**	**Grade 5**	**Grade 6**
Core French	—	—	—	—	30 m/day 150 m/week	30 m/day 150 m/week	30 m/day 150 m/week
English Language Arts	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 115 m/day 575 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week
Health	50 m/week	50 m/week	50 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week
Mathematics	**Minimum** 45 m/day 225 m/week	**Minimum** 45 m/day 225 m/week	**Minimum** 45 m/day 225 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week
Music	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week
Phys. Ed.	20 m/day 100 m/week	20 m/day 100 m/week	20 m/day 100 m/week	30 m/day 150 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week
Science	90 m/week	90 m/week	90 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week
Social Studies	90 m/week	90 m/week	90 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week
Visual Arts	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week
Required Each Day	▸ 4 hours of teaching (may include 15-minute recess)			▸ 5 hours of teaching (may include 15-minute recess)			
	▸ 45 m. *Math Time* including 5 m. Mental Math grades 1–3			▸ 60 m. *Math Time* including 5 m. Mental Math			
	▸ 60 m. block *Active Reading Hour* within time designated for English language arts (90 m. in grades primary–2, 115 m. in grade 3)				▸ *Learn to Read/Read to Learn Time* totalling 60 m. integrated into English language arts and other subject areas		
	▸ significant opportunities for moderate physical activity						

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

TIME TO LEARN STRATEGY

Guidelines for Instructional Time: Grades Primary–6

Immersion Program: Grades Primary–6

IMMERSION PROGRAM							
	Primary	**Grade 1**	**Grade 2**	**Grade 3**	**Grade 4**	**Grade 5**	**Grade 6**
English Language Arts	—	—	—	**Minimum:** 45–50 m./d. 225–250 /w	**Minimum:** 45–50 m./d. 225–250 /w	**Minimum:** 45–50 m./d. 225–250 /w	**Minimum:** 45–50 m./d. 225–250 /w
French Language Arts	**Minimum:** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum** 90 m/day 450 m/week	**Minimum:** 75–80 m./d. 375–400 /w	**Minimum:** 75–80 m./d. 375–400 /w	**Minimum:** 75–80 m./d. 375–400 /w	**Minimum:** 75–80 m./d. 375–400 /w
Health	50 m/week	50 m/week	50 m/week	55–60 m/w	55–60 m/w	55–60 m/w	55–60 m/w
Mathematics	**Minimum** 45 m/day 225 m/week	**Minimum** 45 m/day 225 m/week	**Minimum** 45 m/day 225 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week	**Minimum** 60 m/day 300 m/week
Music	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week
Phys. Ed.	20 m/day 100 m/week	20 m/day 100 m/week	20 m/day 100 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week	25 m/day 125 m/week
Science	90 m/week	90 m/week	90 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week	110 m/week
Social Studies	90 m/week	90 m/week	90 m/week	100–110 m/week	100–110 m/week	100–110 m/week	100–110 m/week
Visual Arts	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week	60 m/week
Required Each Day	▸ **Minimum** 4 hours of teaching (may include 15-minute recess)			▸ **Minimum** 5 hours of teaching (may include 15-minute recess)			
	▸ **Minimum** 45 m. *Temps pour les maths* including 5 m. Mental Math grades 1–2			▸ **Minimum** 60 m. *Temps pour les maths* including 5 m. Mental Math			
	▸ **Minimum** 90 m/day in grades primary–2 , 75–80 m/day in grade 3 for French language arts ▸ **Minimum** 45–50 m/day for English language arts ▸ 60 m. block *L'heure de lecture active* within time designated for French language arts				▸ **Minimum** 75–80 m/day in grades 4–6 for French language arts ,45–50 m/day for English language arts ▸ *Apprendre à lire/Lire pour apprendre* totalling 60 m. integrated into French language arts and other subject areas		
	▸ significant opportunities for moderate physical activity						

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

TIME TO LEARN STRATEGY: Instructional Time Grades 7 and 8

1. Background

The *Time to Learn Strategy* paper (February 2002) included the recommendation that boards and their schools review time for learning in grades 7–9 in priority areas:

- mathematics (Goal: 60 minutes per day, represents 20% of instructional time)
- language arts and opportunities for literacy learning in other subject areas (part of the *Active Readers* initiative introduced in grade 7 in 2002–03, grade 8 in 2003–04, and grade 9 in 2004–05)
- physical education and physical activity programs

The *Time to Learn Discussion Paper: Instructional Time Grades 7–9* (June 2002) included the following:

- ***Mathematics***: It is recommended that schools set the goal of 60 minutes daily for mathematics. This represents 20% of instructional time. This math hour will include five minutes every day of mental math.
- ***English Language Arts/French Immersion Language Arts***: It is recommended that schools set the goal of 60 minutes daily (300 minutes per week) for English language arts/French immersion language arts. This represents 20% of instructional time. It is expected that at least 33% of time allotted for language arts be committed to reading instruction, reading, and related activities.

  With reference to the allotment of instructional time for English language arts in extended core French programs, *Program Policy for French Second Language Programs* (1998) notes that the total amount of time allotted for the extended core French (French and social studies) should be equal to the total amount of time allotted for English language arts and social studies in the English program. [See *Program Policy for French Second Language Programs* (1998), p. 8.]

  The allotment of instructional time for English language arts in grades 7 and 8 French immersion programs should equate to the time allotment for core French in the English program.

  Time to Learn Discussion Paper: Instructional Time Grades 7–9 (June 2002), pp. 2–3

2. Policy

- Beginning in September 2004, 60 minutes every day will become a *minimum* requirement in grade 7 and grade 8 for instructional time allotted to mathematics and to English language arts in the English program. Beginning in September 2004, 60 minutes every day will become a *minimum* requirement for instructional time allotted in grade 7 and grade 8 to mathematics and to French language arts in the immersion program.

  Public School Programs 2003–2004 (p. B-12)

- The Department will monitor implementation of these minimum time requirements in 2004–05. It is expected that boards will ensure implementation in **all** schools with grade 7 and/or grade 8 in their jurisdictions.

3. Core French

- Thirty minutes per day, or its equivalent, of instructional time allotted to core French (10%) should be regarded as a *minimum* allotment.

- Boards are required to report to the Department of Education (Director, French Second Language Division) on actions taken to comply with Public School Program requirements in this regard.

- *Program Policy for French Second Language Programs* (June 1998) noted that "Research and good practice has shown that Core French should be scheduled for a minimum of 40 minutes per day from grades 4–12 inclusively. This amount of time is required for the learner to achieve a reasonable level of second language communicative ability." Within the current parameters of 300 minutes of instructional time per day, it is difficult to achieve this goal, which represents 13.3% of instructional time.

4. Balance

- It is important to ensure a reasonable balance of instructional time among core French, health/personal development and relationships, physical education, science, and social studies which are all compulsory subjects in the public school program for these grades and require similar allocation of instructional time requirements to enable teachers and students to address the prescribed curriculum outcomes.

5. Accountability

- It is the duty of a principal to ensure that the public school program and curricula are implemented.
  [*The Education Act* 38 (2)(a)]

- A school board shall ... ensure that its schools adhere to the provincial program of studies.
  [*The Education Act* 64 (2)(b)]

For further information, contact the following:

Ann Blackwood
Director
English Program Services
Nova Scotia Department of Education
PO Box 578
Halifax NS B3J 2S9

phone: (902) 424-5745
e-mail: blackwaa@gov.ns.ca
Fax: (902) 424-0613

Andrée Green
Director
French Second Language Division
Nova Scotia Department of Education
PO Box 578
Halifax NS B3J 2S9

phone: (902) 424-6327
e-mail: greenam@gov.ns.ca
Fax: (902) 424-0057